

# RAC NOTES

*Arizona Bureau of Land Management  
Resource Advisory Council Newsletter  
July 2003, Number 11*

## **“Sustaining Working Landscapes” Initiative Gets RAC Attention**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is considering new management approaches intended to promote better partnerships with grazing permittees, advance the long-term health and productivity of the public lands, provide for sustainable ranching and improve the BLM’s business practices. The approaches under consideration comprise what the BLM calls its Sustaining Working Landscape (SWL) Initiative, which contains regulatory and non-regulatory components. The initiative seeks to put into action Interior Secretary Gale Norton’s “Four C’s principles: *consultation, communication, and cooperation*, all in the service of *conservation*. The overall objective is to improve range conditions that support “working landscapes,” that is, landscapes that are economically productive and environmentally healthy.

The SWL Initiative reflects the view of BLM Director Kathleen Clarke, and this Administration, that the BLM should look to those closest to the land – rather than Washington D.C. – for answers to public land issues. That is why the Bureau is actively soliciting input on this initiative from its 24 Resource Advisory Councils.

These management approaches were first introduced to the public in March 2003 and 23 workshops were held in April throughout the 11 western states to gather public comments on their feasibility.

In this next step of the policy development, the BLM is asking the RAC to provide advice and recommendations on BLM’s overall objectives and direction, and on the adequacy of BLM’s responses to public concerns about the management approaches already identified. In addition, they are being asked to identify other tools or mechanisms for achieving BLM’s objectives, and of critical importance, to bring their local knowledge to bear in identifying opportunities for applications or pilot projects where BLM can test and demonstrate some of these approaches.

To this end, the RAC Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration (S&Gs) Working Group has been asked to review the SWL Initiative and the summary of public comments received from the April workshops, and to provide some feedback to the BLM for their consideration in the policy development of these management approaches.

The S&Gs Working Group draft recommendations will be provided to the full RAC at its September 17 meeting. The meeting will be held at the BLM National Training Center (NTC), 9828 North 31<sup>st</sup>

Avenue in Phoenix. *(The NTC is located just west of the Metro Center Mall, south of Peoria Avenue.)*

**Next RAC Meeting Will Focus on Sustaining Working Landscape Initiative, RAC Recommendations and Public Comments on RAC Recommendations**

**YOU ARE INVITED AND URGED TO ATTEND!**

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Arizona Resource Advisory Council (RAC) on September 17, will focus on BLM's Sustaining Working Landscape Initiative (SWL).

The RAC invites the public to participate in this meeting, to learn more about the SWL Initiative, and to provide their comments on the RAC's recommendations to the BLM concerning proposed management approaches designed to promote effective partnerships with grazing permittees and to advance the long-term health and productivity of the public lands.

According to the RAC Chair Frances Werner, "Although the RAC is a representative group of the public land stakeholders, it is very important to have public participation at this next RAC meeting. We are looking forward to gathering the public's ideas and comments on the RAC's recommendations on BLM's policy development of the SWL Initiative."

The RAC Meeting on September 17 will begin at 9:30 a.m., and after the opening remarks, the first topic of the day will be the Sustaining Working Landscape Initiative presentation and RAC discussion of the S&Gs Working Group's proposed recommendations.

Verbal and written comments on the proposal will be accepted during the public comment period, which will be right after the presentation and RAC discussion (approximately between 10:30 and 12:30 p.m.).

**Background Information on BLM's Sustaining Working Landscape Initiative** *(The following information was first made available to the public in March, 2003)*

**Concepts for Promoting Sustainable Ranching and Sustainable Landscapes**

Sustainable rangelands, sustainable ranching – these mutually attainable goals are actually dependant on each other. Certain BLM grazing policies can hinder the efforts of ranchers and conservation-minded citizens who wish to work actively with BLM to reach these goals.

BLM plans to change these policies to facilitate improved partnerships with those who value maintaining and restoring western resources and landscapes while preserving the vitality of ranching and all that it contributes to western lifestyles.

Our objective is to increase the flexibility of grazing permittees and lessees in working with the BLM, conservationists and others to maintain or restore working landscapes, while at the same time maintaining the economic and operational viability of their ranching operations.

The concepts presented below provide a framework for citizen-based stewardship that supports *conservation* through *consultation, communication, and cooperation*. Changes in the grazing rules, an effort that began earlier this month, will be needed before we can implement the “Reserve Common Allotment” concept presented below. We believe that the other concepts can be implemented as soon as we develop the appropriate management tools.

We invite you to examine these concepts. BLM will be hosting between one and three grazing policy development workshops per state across the West from March 31 to April 25. In addition, one workshop will be held in the Washington, D.C. area.

The purpose of these workshops is to allow you to provide your thoughts concerning these concepts, as well as others that would achieve the same ends – increasing the flexibility of working collaboratively to maintain or restore the public land resources. Those interested in participating in the workshops should check with their State or local BLM office for details. (*Workshops were held in Safford – April 9, Phoenix – April 11, and Kingman – April 24.*)

### **Concept 1: Conservation Partnerships**

Authorized under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Conservation Partnerships provide an opportunity for permittees and lessees, on a voluntary basis, to enter into contracts or agreements with BLM to achieve upland recovery, riparian/wetland restoration, enhanced or improved water quality and quantity, improved wildlife or fisheries habitat, and listed species recovery. In return,

conservation partnerships would allow permittees and lessees to seek grants to pay for labor and materials invested in conservation practices or provide increased management flexibility within agreed upon parameters.

### **Concept 2: Reserved Common Allotments (RCAs)**

Reserve Common Allotments would be managed as reserve forage areas for the purposes of rangeland restoration and recovery. BLM would allow RCAs to be used by permittees and lessees who are engaged in rangeland restoration and recovery activities that require them to rest their customary allotments. By temporarily shifting their livestock to RCAs, permittees and lessees would be able to address rangeland health issues while simultaneously meeting their economic needs.

### **Concept 3: Voluntary Allotment Restructuring**

Voluntary allotment restructuring involves merging two or more allotments in which one (or more) of the permittees or lessees agrees to temporarily not graze their original herd over the entire area, resulting in lighter grazing use over the larger area. The goal is to improve range conditions while supporting permittee economic viability.

### **Concept 4: Conservation Easements**

Conservation easements are land-use restrictions or constraints voluntarily placed on property by the landowners for the purpose of advancing conservation goals. In many areas of the West, land ownership patterns are intermingled between state, private, federal and other ownerships. In some areas, small parcels of public land managed by the BLM are completely surrounded by larger parcels of

private land, which leads to an unmanageable situation. Often these small parcels of public land are identified in agency land use plans as available for disposal. Under this concept, prior to disposal, BLM would place a conservation easement on the small isolated parcel of public land. In exchange for the value of the small parcel of public land with the conservation easement, the owner of the adjacent private land would place a similar conservation easement on their surrounding private land. The results would be larger blocks of land that would preserve the conservation values in accordance with the covenants of the conservation easement.

*This information was provided to the public during BLM's 23 Workshops in April 2003.*

**Note:** *Although use of conservation easements is certainly an option, BLM has determined its ability to use them is limited. Therefore, BLM will not be emphasizing their use as a major policy tool in the immediate future.*

*Also in its earlier concept paper, BLM discussed "Endangered Species Mitigation" as a policy concept. Although BLM has not dropped this concept, it will be addressed in a broader context under the heading "Landscape Habitat Improvement".*

*BLM anticipates that the SWL concepts and terminology will continue to evolve as it receives further input from the RACs and the public. At this point, the policy framework is very fluid.*

### **BLM to Finalize Sustaining Working Landscape Policy after the Grazing Rule is Completed**

Since several of the grazing regulatory changes being considered would complement the SWL policy development effort, BLM has decided to postpone preparation of a final policy until it has substantially completed its rulemaking process.

The 60-day public comment period on the grazing rule changes ended on May 2. BLM conducted four public "scoping" meetings in March 2003.

The BLM received more than 7,500 comments, many in form-letter format, which the Bureau will consider in developing a proposed rule and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The BLM intends to publish a proposed rule and Draft EIS later this year and a final rule next year.

## **RAC Membership**

Following is the list of current RAC members, the category they represent, and their place of residence. Each member's terms are for 3-years, and are staggered.

### **Commodity Category (5 members)**

John Neal, Grazing, Kingman, AZ - Term Ending 9/03

Lee Aitken, Energy/Minerals, Tucson, AZ - Term Ending 9/04

Sandra McCullen, Off-Road Vehicle Use, Mesa, AZ - Term Ending 9/03

Stephen Saway, Off-Road Vehicle Use, Sierra Vista, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

Rick Holloway, Commercial Recreation, Lake Havasu City, AZ - Term Ending 9/04

### **Non-Commodity Category (5 members)**

Glendon Collins, Dispersed Recreation, Phoenix, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

William Branan, Environmental, Elgin,  
AZ - Term Ending 9/04

Sanford Cohen, Dispersed Recreation,  
Prescott, AZ - Term Ending 9/04

Christine Newell, Environmental,  
Flagstaff, AZ - Term Ending 9/03

\*Frances Werner, Dispersed Recreation,  
Tucson, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

#### **Local Area Interests (5 members)**

Vacant, Elected Official, Morenci, AZ -  
Term Ending 9/05

Lorraine Eiler, Native American Tribes,  
Glendale, AZ - Term Ending 9/03

Lamar Smith, Academia, Benson, AZ -  
Term Ending 9/05

Mary Dahl, Public-At-Large, Rio Rico,  
AZ - Term Ending 9/04

Norman Wallen, Public-At-Large,  
Flagstaff, AZ - Term Ending 9/03

*\*Frances Werner is the chair for the  
Arizona RAC.*

#### **For Further Information**

If you have any questions about the RAC,  
contact Deborah Stevens, BLM Public Affairs  
Specialist, at the BLM Arizona State Office,  
222 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ  
85004-2203, or call 602-417-9215. For the  
latest approved RAC Meeting Minutes, check  
BLM's External Home Page @  
[www.az.blm.gov](http://www.az.blm.gov)

#### **About RAC Notes**

RAC Notes is published periodically by  
the RAC Public Relations Working Group to  
provide the public with information related to  
current RAC activities and public land issues.  
To get on the mailing list, please contact  
Deborah Stevens at (602) 417-9215 or e-mail  
to [Deborah\\_Stevens@blm.gov](mailto:Deborah_Stevens@blm.gov).

The RAC Notes is also posted on the  
BLM Home Page @ [www.az.blm.gov](http://www.az.blm.gov) under  
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